



FAIRFAX BOULEVARD MASTER PLAN

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FAIRFAX BOULEVARD MASTER PLAN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why a Plan?

Fairfax Boulevard has the opportunity to become a model for corridor redevelopment. Its current condition as a road that caters to pass-through traffic, rather than the needs of the local community does not enhance Fairfax's overall character.

This plan is a comprehensive strategy for growth and redevelopment of the corridor; it seeks to improve the safety and operational efficiency for all modes of travel, while creating a more economically productive address. The plan envisions that Fairfax Boulevard can be more than just improved; it can be one of the most memorable streets in America.

How was this plan created?

"Designing in public", the team of planners, engineers, architects, and economists conducted an open planning process in March 2007 to identify the ideas, needs and concerns of the community; over 500 interested residents and stakeholders participated.

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THIS PLAN

- **Make the Boulevard a 'great walkable street':**
Fairfax Boulevard should be rebuilt according to a design that would transform the corridor into a community asset. The goal is to create a safe and attractive street enhanced by trees while balancing the needs of pedestrians and motorists.
- **Allow change on the community's terms, controlling size & scale:**
Future development needs to respect the community's overall vision for the corridor. Revising the existing land development regulations and building with a form-based focus would be the best way to realize this vision.

- **Support a mix of uses & destinations:**
The corridor should support not just retailing, car dealerships and hotels, but also housing, workplaces, green spaces, and civic uses; a mix of uses is essential to conquering transportation problems.
- **Balance traffic capacity, safety & character:**
Fairfax Boulevard can be transformed into an urban street address that is conducive to a wider variety of economically productive uses instead of the narrow mix of a typical suburban strip; this can be accomplished within an engineering strategy that builds capacity and improves safety.
- **Plan for feasible, phase-able pieces:**
Complete transformation of the corridor will not happen overnight, so the plan is designed to be broken down into small components that can be redeveloped as the market demands.
- **Enable the market:**
Promoting a variety of new uses will generate significant economic return and a memorable place that can be enjoyed by the Fairfax residents and visitors.

Economics

The economic health of the Boulevard is critical to maintaining the City's quality of life and fiscal self-sufficiency. While the Boulevard is an active commercial street, the corridor is often seen as a declining asset. Fairfax Boulevard is an aging strip-commercial corridor which fails to compete with the new development located just outside of the City limits. Due to this decline in competitiveness, the City realized the need for a plan to guide redevelopment efforts and to bolster the Boulevard's position within the regional economy. The resulting Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan represents a

shared vision for the future of the Boulevard which details specific design solutions and a feasible implementation strategy.

Transportation

Engineers recognized a fundamental tension between the need to move large volumes of traffic and the desire to create a walkable environment and 'great street'; the plan calls for balancing this tension by incorporating classic multi-way boulevard concepts for Fairfax Boulevard. A conceptual design is included. A modern roundabout is recommended for Fairfax Circle and other intersection improvements at Northfax and Kamp Washington are included. A street map indicates how to shape the thoroughfare network as redevelopment occurs.

Implementation

The plan lays out a series of steps to be undertaken to realize the vision. First among these is adopting a Form-Based Code.

The Implementation section of the plan spells out future planning tasks, promotional tasks, and a series of funding mechanisms for public capital improvements and private development.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

- **Make the Boulevard a 'great walkable street'**
- **Allow change on the community's terms, controlling size & scale**
- **Support a mix of uses & destinations**
- **Balance traffic capacity, safety & character**
- **Plan for feasible, phase-able pieces**
- **Enable the market**



research & analysis 1

"Fairfax Boulevard is our economic and service corridor in the City."

– Mayor Robert Lederer

March 24, 2007, Hands-on Design Session

Fairfax Boulevard is one of the most visible and economically significant thoroughfares in the Washington, D.C. metro region. Located in the City of Fairfax, the Boulevard is home to a variety of retail, office, and auto-related establishments. The City relies on the Boulevard as its main commercial core, but also as a primary source of real estate revenue. The economic health of the Boulevard is critical to maintaining the City's quality of life and fiscal self-sufficiency. A diversified economy within the City, and the success of the Boulevard, helps to lessen the tax burden on residents.

While the Boulevard is an active commercial street, the corridor is often seen as a declining asset. Fairfax Boulevard is an aging strip-commercial corridor which fails to compete with the new development located just outside of the City limits. Due to this decline in competitiveness, the City realized the need for a plan to guide redevelopment efforts and to bolster the Boulevard's position within the regional economy. The resulting Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan represents a shared vision for the future of the Boulevard which details specific design solutions and a feasible implementation strategy.

In March 2007 the City and citizens of Fairfax, along with the town planning firm of Dover, Kohl & Partners, gathered to create a plan for the redevelopment of the Boulevard. The planning process began with a review of previous planning efforts, along with a thorough evaluation of the study area. This chapter provides an overview of the physical conditions of the Boulevard; the chapters following describe the charrette and resulting plan.

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Aerial view of the study area

Fairfax Boulevard Analysis

The study area defined for the Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan includes the entire Route 50 (Fairfax Boulevard) corridor within the City of Fairfax. Route 29 and Route 50 become one as they enter the City from the east, splitting back into two streets (Fairfax Boulevard, Route 50 and Lee Highway, Route 29) at the Kamp Washington intersection. The study area is bound by Pickett Road to the east and Jermantown Road to the west. The north and south limits of the study area extend approximately 200 feet from the Boulevard. The primary study area includes the limits of the Fairfax Boulevard Business Improvement District, but for purposes of planning the team looked beyond this boundary.

Fairfax Boulevard is 3½ miles long. The Boulevard and its surrounding properties contain today over 120 retail stores, over 30 personal service establishments, two dozen auto dealerships, 18 multi-tenant office buildings, and scores of other uses. In total, approximately 300 parcels exist along the Boulevard, accounting for 449 acres of land (not including rights-of-way, such as roads).

The thorough examination of background information, combined with photographing existing conditions and analyzing base maps, prepared the planning team for creating a workable plan for Fairfax Boulevard.

HISTORY OF THE BOULEVARD

The City of Fairfax was founded in 1805 under the name of Providence at a crossroads near the geographic center of Fairfax County. The City was chosen as the seat of Fairfax County largely because of its central location. Two hundred years later, the City still sits at a regional crossroads, although the original intersection (Main Street and Chain Bridge Road) has been joined by many other important regional crossroads.

Through the 1950s, Fairfax remained a small town in a predominantly rural county. In 1930, Fairfax County had a population of just 25,000 and was only

the 27th most populated county in Virginia. Although the county seat, the then town of Fairfax had a population under 2,000 people as late as 1950.

In 1934 the road currently known as Fairfax Boulevard (then Lee Highway) or Route 50 was constructed, connecting the eastern portion of Lee Highway with an area known as Kamp Washington, for its former location as an auto camp in the 1930s to 1950s. The road was billed as a “bypass”, allowing motorists to reach Kamp Washington and points west without driving through what is now known as Old Town Fairfax. In the early days of the road, few



Fairfax, 1915



Fairfax, 1951



Fairfax, 1966



Fairfax, 1984

permanent structures or services existed. Even through the 1940s only a handful of businesses operated along the road.

Gradually the economic and social focus of the town began to shift to the new bypass. Fairfax High School (now Paul VI Catholic High School) was built in 1936. The Fairfax Theatre (at what is now a Toyota dealership) opened in 1947 and the first shopping center, Fairfax Shopping Center, was built in 1950.

Population in both the City and County exploded in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1961, the town of Fairfax incorporated as a City and become independent of the surrounding county. Between 1950 and 1970, the population of Fairfax City increased by over 1,000 percent to roughly 22,000 people. Over the same period, the surrounding county saw its population increase to nearly one-half million, and became the state's largest jurisdiction in 1970.

**For more information on the history of Fairfax and the Boulevard, please visit the Virginia Room at the Fairfax City Regional Library.*



A marketing postcard for Kamp Washington



Kamp Washington area, 1937



Vincent's Diner, 1952



Ed's Bait Shop, 1967



Fairfax Circle, 1927



Fairfax Circle, 1940s



Fairfax Circle, 1970s

HISTORICAL ECONOMIC FORCES

Ever since the road was built in the 1930s, development and redevelopment along Fairfax Boulevard have mirrored prevailing economic trends. Today the Boulevard is economically varied, with a mixture of retail, office, hotels, restaurants, automobile dealerships and other uses. Such variation took decades to occur, and included spurts of development and expansion in a variety of economic sectors. Several of these are described below.

HOTELS AND MOTELS

Lodging became a burgeoning need in the 1930s through the 1950s as Americans became increasingly mobile. Tourist camps, where travelers rented a small amount of land to fit a car and tent, became common in the 1930s to serve travelers looking for affordable accommodations. One such establishment, Kamp Washington, was located near what is now the intersection of Fairfax Boulevard and Main Street. The name, Kamp Washington, is still used today to refer to the general area.

Travelers' preferences quickly evolved from campsites to cabins, and eventually to motor lodges and motels. The Fairfax area established a reputation as a lodging destination and at its peak, over two dozen hotels, motels, motor courts, and tourist camps lined the Boulevard from Fairfax Circle to Kamp Washington. Some of these original motels remain, although the sites of most early motels were redeveloped into other uses as consumer demand for motels weakened in favor of larger hotels.

Some larger hotels have been built along the Boulevard. As of 2007, four hotels containing a total of nearly 500 rooms operate along the Corridor, as do five remaining smaller motels,

all built in the early 1950s. However, the rate of lodging development and the acreage devoted to lodging in Fairfax has never equaled the pace seen in the industry's early years.

SHOPPING CENTERS

When Fairfax's population grew in the 1950s, retail development followed the influx of people. Observing the prevailing trends of the time, the preferred model for retail development in the 1950s became the shopping center – one-story retail buildings with room for multiple tenants, easy automobile access, and plentiful off-street parking in front of the stores.

Demand for new shopping center construction reached its peak in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the shopping centers found along Fairfax Boulevard today were built during that period, including the Fairfax Shopping Center (1950), Kamp Washington Shopping Center (1961), Fairfax Circle Center (1963), and Fairfax Circle Plaza (1964). In the early years, shopping centers in Fairfax tended to include a food market, a drug store, a barbershop, and other retail uses to serve the needs of local residents.

Retail trends and customer preferences have constantly evolved. While in the 1960s, shopping centers were the preferred format for retail development, subsequent decades saw the rise of enclosed malls (Tysons Corner Center, Fair Oaks Mall); power centers (Potomac Yard Center, Potomac Mills Mall); and mixed-use lifestyle centers (Reston Town Center, Fairfax Corner). These types of developments have added many new dimensions to the region's retail market.

In order to stay competitive within this changing retail environment, the shopping experience along

Fairfax Boulevard needs to be updated to reflect the wants and needs of the community.

OFFICE BUILDINGS

Northern Virginia experienced an unprecedented boom in office construction in the 1980s and the City of Fairfax benefited from this regional economic trend with the construction of approximately 2.5 million square feet of office space in the 1980s alone. About one-third of this office development occurred along Fairfax Boulevard – the biggest construction boom the Boulevard has ever seen.

Many of the existing office buildings along the Boulevard were built during the 1980s. These include the Fifty Sixty-Six Office Plaza (1983-85), Sherwood Plaza (1985), the Gatewood Plaza (built in 1986), and the front two buildings in the WillowWood Plaza complex located on Eaton Place (late 1980s).

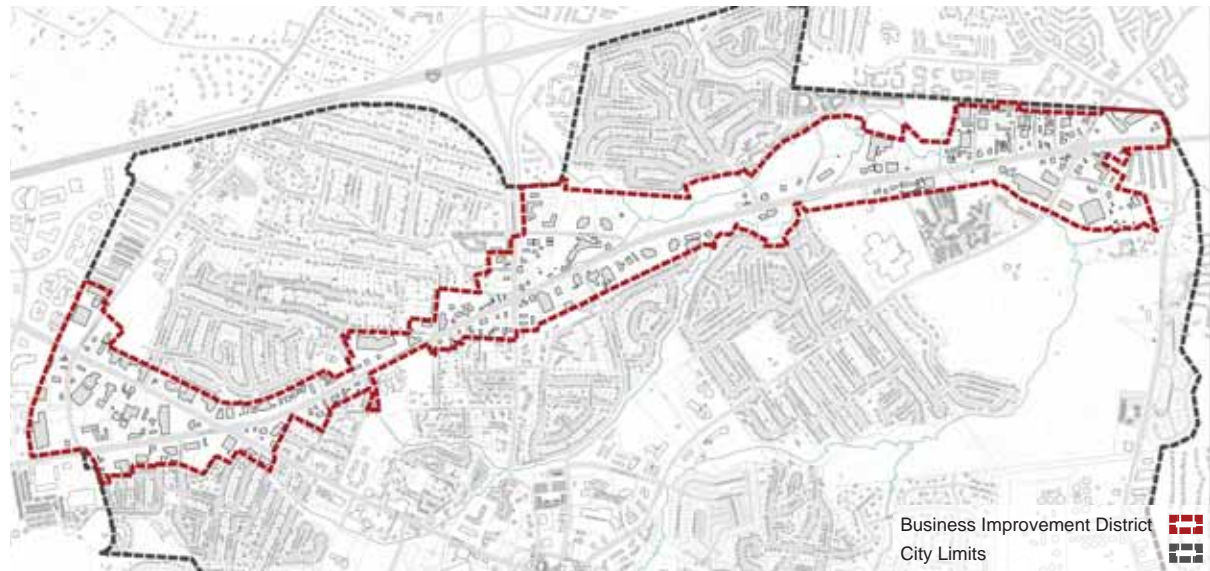
The office boom came to an abrupt end in the late 1980s as the nation faced a widespread recession. During the following decade, no new office space was built along Fairfax Boulevard. It was not until 2001, with the construction of the final two buildings of the WillowWood Plaza development, that office construction returned to the Boulevard.

RESIDENTIAL USES

Throughout its history, residential uses have not been part of the economic mix along the Boulevard. There are numerous opportunities to include residential uses in the continued development of the Boulevard, adding to the vibrancy and economic success of the area.

FAIRFAX BOULEVARD BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

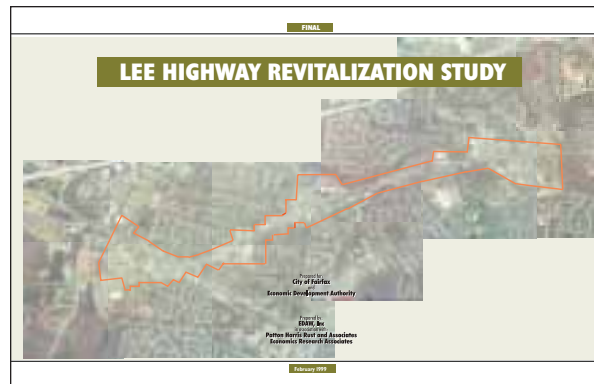
The City of Fairfax Council created the Fairfax Boulevard Business Improvement District (BID) in May 2005 to stimulate new energy and development in the Route 50/29 business corridor. The District includes properties along Fairfax Boulevard and Lee Highway (Rt. 50/29), and parts of Main Street and Jermantown Road within the City's limits. Commercial landowners within the BID are assessed a special tax to fund BID efforts. The Fairfax Boulevard Partnership is the incorporated entity governing the BID. Its membership is comprised of all land and business owners within the BID. Its Board of Directors consists of nine landowners, nine business owners, and one chairman. In July 2005 the portion of Route 50 within the City of Fairfax limits was renamed to Fairfax Boulevard. The name change was recommended to City Council by the Lee Highway Task Force as a way to strengthen the identity and economic development potential of the corridor.



Fairfax Boulevard Business Improvement District

STUDYING THE BOULEVARD

The team analyzed past studies of the area, the City's Zoning Code, recent development proposals, traffic data, and other relevant background information. Being one of the City's most visible and economically significant thoroughfares, Fairfax Boulevard has been the subject of periodic studies seeking to bolster the Boulevard's appearance or position within the regional economy. Ranging from goals in a Community Appearance Plan to an early revitalization study, these earlier plans addressed in general terms the potential for redevelopment along the Boulevard and the preferable direction for redevelopment. The reports and plans helped the team to better understand recent efforts to revitalize the corridor and previous community involvement in creating these plans.

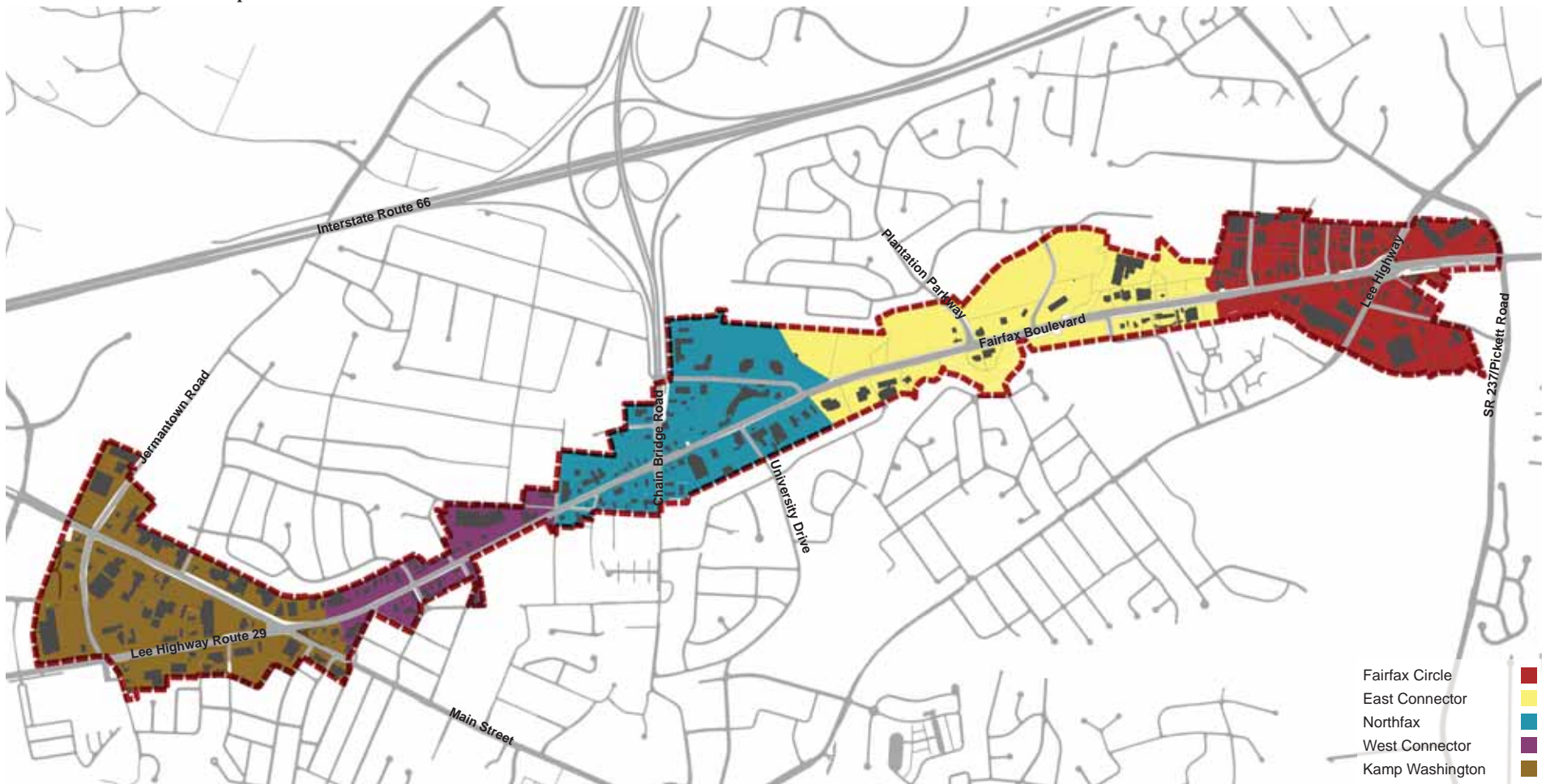


The team reviewed all previous studies relating to Fairfax Boulevard



PLANNING AREAS

For the purpose of this Master Plan, the Boulevard is divided into several areas that each function quite differently within the framework of entire corridor. The Boulevard is organized into three distinct centers – Fairfax Circle, Northfax, and Kamp Washington – and two connectors. The following pages detail the specific physical conditions of each of the areas; recommendations for each area are included in Chapter 4.



Fairfax Boulevard Planning Areas

FAIRFAX CIRCLE

Extending from the City's northeastern limit to the 9700 block of Fairfax Boulevard, the Fairfax Circle area encompasses several shopping centers, retailers, and a 30-acre industrially-zoned area. The intersection of Fairfax Boulevard, Lee Highway, and Old Lee Highway is marked by a 200-foot bisected traffic circle. Fairfax Boulevard traffic flows through the circle, while traffic to and from the intersecting roads flow around the circle.

The Fairfax Circle area contains 99 parcels and 91.3 acres of land (excluding rights-of-way). As of 2006, approximately 44 percent of the Fairfax Circle area's acreage is in retail use, 25 percent is in flex/warehouse use, ten percent is used for vehicle sales and storage, and five percent is used for office space. The area contains three major shopping centers (Fairfax Circle Plaza, Fairfax Circle Center, and Home Depot). One of the City's largest industrial-zoned districts is located northwest of the traffic circle. The industrial properties are contained on four side roads, three of which terminate in dead-ends, and one that connects to a multifamily residential section of Fairfax County. Businesses located within this district are chiefly service-oriented, including ten auto service establishments, four auto body shops, and other similar uses.



Aerial view of Fairfax Circle



Fairfax Circle, looking southwest on Fairfax Boulevard



Side frontage road near the entrance to Fairfax Circle



Fairfax Circle, looking east on Fairfax Boulevard

EAST CONNECTOR

Containing the majority of the Boulevard's open space as well as several office buildings and other uses, the East Connector extends between Fairfax Circle and Northfax– or roughly from the 9800 block through the 10200 block of Fairfax Boulevard. The East Connector contains over 60 acres of undeveloped land on several large parcels along Fairfax Boulevard. The undeveloped parcels add up to over half of the land within the East Connector area. Over two-thirds of this undeveloped land is owned by the City of Fairfax.

Accotink Creek runs to the south of Fairfax Boulevard, and crosses the Boulevard east of Stafford Drive, joining the North Fork just west of the Fairfax Racquet Club. Accotink Creek and its North Fork tributary are designated as Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) or floodplain areas, restricting much of this unimproved land from future development.

Although most of the acreage within the East Connector area is undeveloped, there is considerable commercial activity within the developed portions of the Connector. Three office buildings (Gatewood Plaza, 10089 Fairfax Boulevard, and Sherwood Plaza) and the Fairfax Racquet Club are located in the area.



Aerial view of the East Connector



View looking east along the Boulevard



P.J. Skidoos Restaurant



Town and Country Animal Hospital

NORTHFAX

Encompassing the intersection of Fairfax Boulevard and Chain Bridge Road (Route 123), as well as the surrounding area, Northfax is a primary gateway into the City. Route 123 is the major north-south thoroughfare through the City, taking motorists from Interstate 66 south through Old Town and on to George Mason University.

The Northfax area contains 65 parcels and 94.6 acres of land (excluding rights-of-way). Northfax has the highest proportion of both office uses and automobile dealers of the five Boulevard areas. About one-third of the land within the Northfax area is devoted to office uses, and about one-quarter to auto dealerships and lots. Seventeen percent of the acreage in Northfax is dedicated to retail or restaurant use. WillowWood Plaza, considered the City's premier Class A office space, is located in the area, as well as the oldest shopping center along the Boulevard, Fairfax Shopping Center. Two commercial condominium complexes, Warwick Park and Fairfax Crossroads, straddle Chain Bridge Road just south of Fairfax Boulevard and together account for the largest concentration of commercial condo units on the Boulevard. Four new car dealers are located within the Northfax area, accounting for a total of about 20 acres of land for showrooms, service facilities, and auto storage.



Aerial view of Northfax



Looking north on Chain Bridge Road



Looking east on Fairfax Boulevard



Fairfax Shopping Center

WEST CONNECTOR

The West Connector extends for approximately one-third of a mile from the 10600 block to the 10900 block of Fairfax Boulevard between North-fax and Kamp Washington. The West Connector comprises many small parcels and one large strip shopping center. The largest single property along the corridor, though outside of the Business Improvement District, is the Paul VI Catholic High School. The building, constructed in 1936, was originally the home of Fairfax High School before it moved to its current location on Old Lee Highway in 1972.

The majority of commercial properties within the West Connector are less than two acres in size. The largest commercial feature is the Shops at Fairfax shopping center, which consists of four separate buildings, including a 76,000 square foot supermarket.



Aerial view of the West Connector



Shops at Fairfax shopping center



Businesses on the north side of Fairfax Boulevard are located along a frontage road



KAMP WASHINGTON

The largest of the five areas, Kamp Washington is located around the main intersection of Fairfax Boulevard and Main Street, and extends west to the City limits. The Kamp Washington area includes parcels on Fairfax Boulevard, Lee Highway, Jermantown Road, and within the triangle formed by those three roads.

Kamp Washington contains 64 parcels and 117.9 acres of land (excluding rights-of-way). Land uses within the area are primarily retail oriented. As of 2006, approximately 47 percent of the total acreage in the Fairfax Circle was in retail use, 17 percent was used for vehicle sales and storage, and 14 percent was used for office space. Utilities (Dominion Power and Verizon) occupy about ten acres within the area. The area currently has three shopping centers (Kmart Shopping Center, Kamp Washington Shopping Center, and Fairfax Junction) and Ford and Volvo auto dealerships. The Dominion Virginia Power utility company owns approximately eight acres within the “triangle” between Fairfax Boulevard, Lee Highway, and Jermantown Road, constituting the largest non-retail or office use in the Kamp Washington area. The area also includes the Jermantown Cemetery, one of the few remaining African-American historical sites in Fairfax.



Aerial view of Kamp Washington



Looking north on Jermantown Road



Looking north on Jermantown Road



Kamp Washington Shopping Center

ANALYSIS DIAGRAMS

Using the City's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, the team created a series of analysis diagrams to better understand the dynamics of the planning area.

TOPOGRAPHY

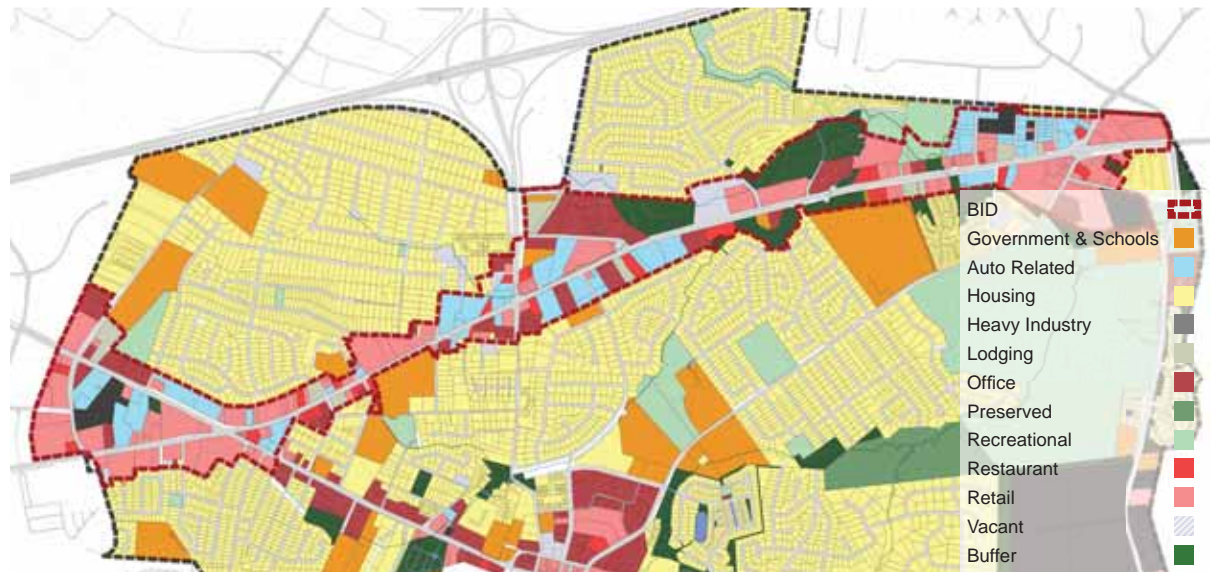
Grade changes are a factor along much of the corridor. As indicated in the diagram, the elevation in the study area ranges from 240 feet to 500 feet above sea level. The highest elevations are located just west of the Kamp Washington intersection. The lowest elevations occur along Accotink Creek and its branches, in the vicinity of the East Connector and Fairfax Circle.



Topography

LAND USE

The following land use diagram documents a variety of development conditions which exist along the corridor. This diagram, or X-ray, is helpful to better understand the current land development dynamics of Fairfax Boulevard. For the most part, uses are separated, with commercial buildings lining the street, and residential buildings located a block or two off the Boulevard. Auto-related uses, along with other retail uses, occupy a significant share of real estate along the corridor.

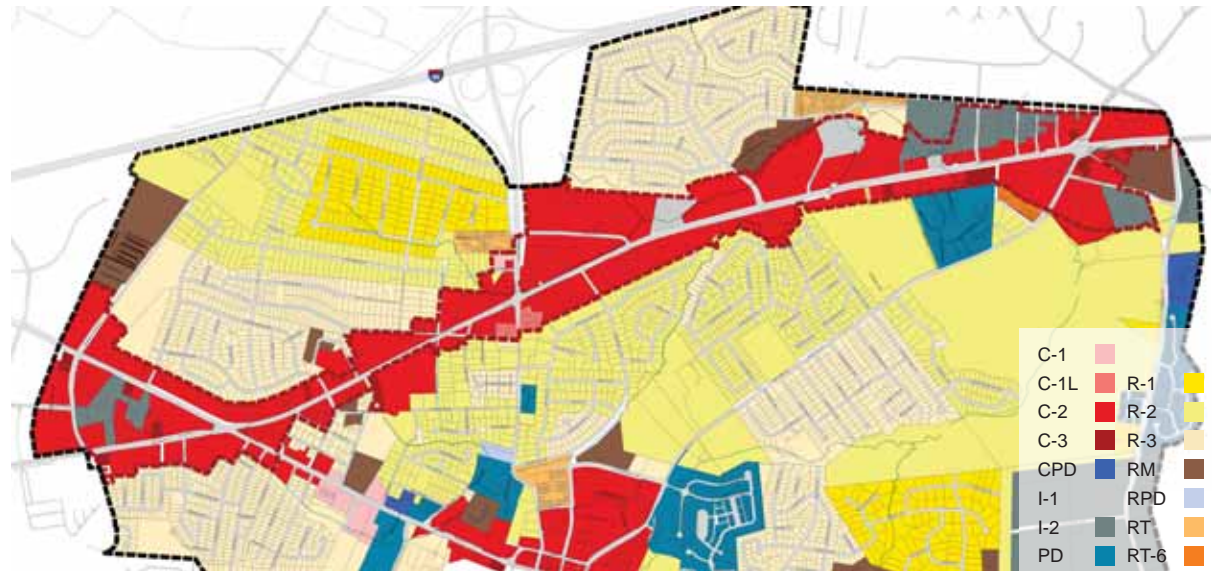


Existing land uses

ZONING

Properties located along Fairfax Boulevard are primarily zoned C-2, Commercial. There is a limited amount of I-1 and I-2, Industrial zoning in Kamp Washington and Fairfax Circle. The entire area is included as a Highway Commercial Overlay Zone.

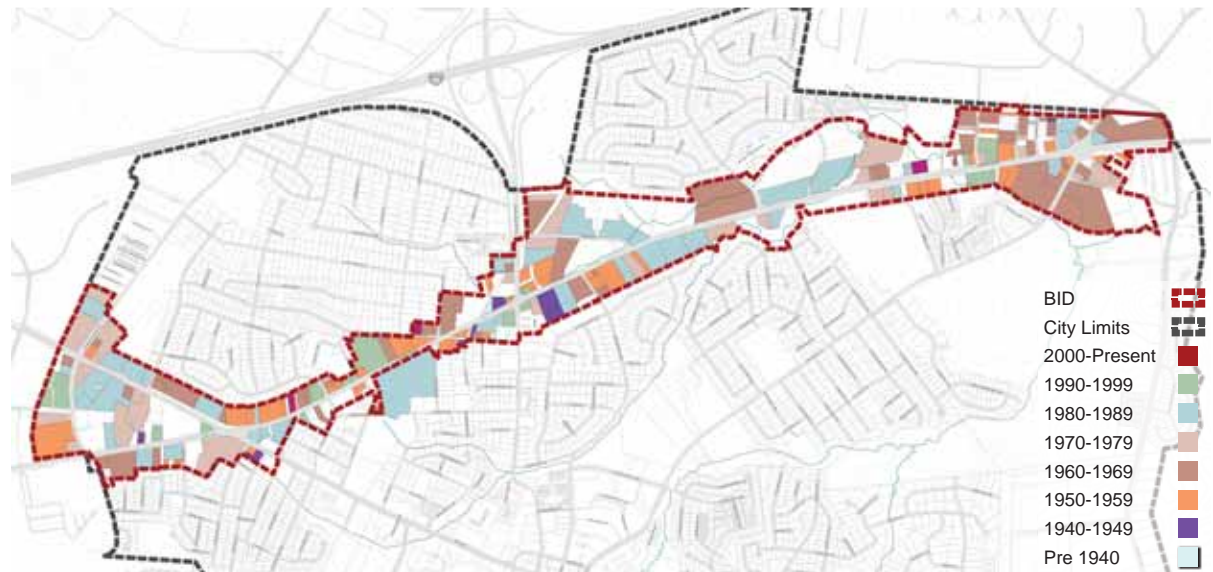
Residential zones flank the corridor to the north and south. Such a close proximity between the corridor and residential neighborhoods requires careful attention to design and mitigation of commercial activities that may negatively affect nearby residences. Physical features such as building size, architecture, and landscaping are important for creating an acceptable transition from more urban to residential areas. Throughout this plan, such considerations are taken into account in order to ensure the long-term viability of a mixed-use corridor surrounded by residential neighborhoods.



Existing zoning

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

The majority of development along the corridor occurred between 1950 and 1989. Fairfax Boulevard was constructed in 1934. Few buildings pre-date 1950. Fairfax High School (now Paul VI Catholic High School) was built in 1936; Fairfax Theatre (at what is now a Toyota dealership) opened in 1947. Vincent's Diner, constructed in 1952 is one of the most significant and revered historic landmarks. Limited development took place in the 1990s, primarily at Kamp Washington, on the north side of the West Connector, at Northfax, and near Draper Drive at Fairfax Circle. Only a few buildings have been added since 2000.



Date of construction

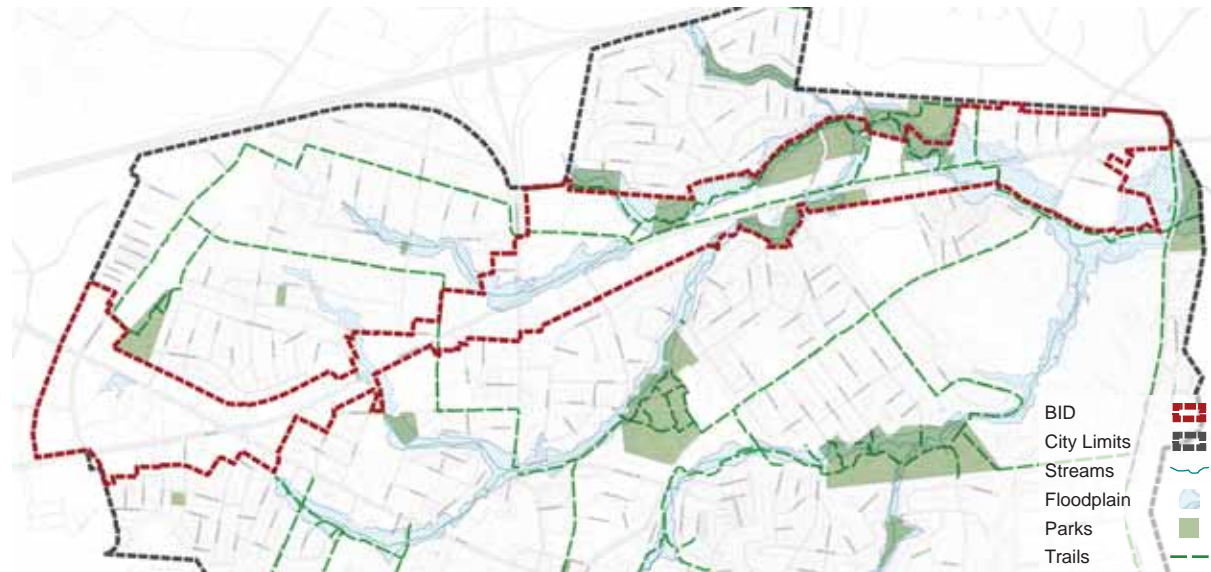
NATURAL CONDITIONS

The Fairfax Boulevard corridor is part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Accotink Creek and its branches are the major natural feature in the area, running parallel to the Boulevard throughout much of its length. Together with the North Fork of the creek and the Tusico Branch, Accotink Creek and its tributaries intersect Fairfax Boulevard at four separate points before being joined by Daniel's Run and flowing out of the City east of Pickett Road.

As required by the Commonwealth of Virginia, Fairfax incorporated the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Ordinance into the City's Zoning Code in 2003. This act established Resource Protection Areas (RPAs), which includes water bodies with perennial flow, as well as a 100-foot buffer area surrounding such water bodies. Because Accotink Creek and its tributaries meander throughout the Fairfax Boulevard corridor, a sizable portion of the Boulevard is designated as being within the City's RPA. More than three dozen properties are either wholly or partially within the designated RPAs, thus restricting the types of new development in those areas.

FLOOD ZONES

Significant portions of the Boulevard and surrounding properties fall within the 100-year floodplain or within Resource Protection Areas. In addition to 90.2 acres of RPA land within the study area, 123.2 acres are designated as being within the 100-year floodplain (areas subject to inundation from abnormally high water flow resulting from a magnitude of flooding that is likely to occur once every 100 years).



Natural conditions



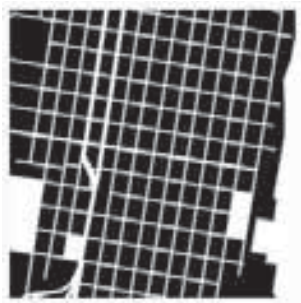
Flood zones

SCALE COMPARISONS

Scale comparisons helped the planners and community participants to better understand the scale of Fairfax Boulevard in relation to other memorable corridors and great places. This page shows the Boulevard at the same scale as other well-known towns and corridors. The scale comparisons give light to the vast amount of land available along the corridor, much of which could be redeveloped at a higher density. The scale comparisons also help explain a key source of the corridor's traffic problems, the lack of an interconnected road network along and across the Boulevard.



Fairfax Boulevard
Fairfax, VA



Richmond Highway
Alexandria, VA



Main Street
Fairfax, VA



Broughton Street
Savannah, GA



Monument Avenue
Richmond, VA



Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA



The Mall
Washington, DC



creating the plan 2

The plan for Fairfax Boulevard was created through teamwork and collaboration.

Community involvement was an essential component in creating a workable vision and plan for Fairfax Boulevard. The visualizations, plans, and recommendations found in the Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan are the result of extensive public input from citizens, business owners, stakeholders, and leaders in the community. In March 2007, community members came together in an open planning process to identify the ideas, needs, and concerns regarding the future of the Boulevard. Designing in public, participants and stakeholders were offered the opportunity to give continual input on the plan. Organized as an intensive design event called a *charrette*, the community and team of design professionals worked to create the plan over the course of seven days. More than 500 interested residents and stakeholders participated in the planning process. Working together as a community is the best way to guide growth and assure quality development for future generations of Fairfax residents. The Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan demonstrates just this kind of teamwork.

What Is A Charrette?

Charrette is a French word that translates as "little cart." At the leading architecture school of the 19th century, the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, students would be assigned a tough design problem to work out under pressure of time. They would continue sketching as fast as they could, even as little carts, *charrettes*, carried their drawing boards away to be judged and graded. Today, "charrette" has come to describe a rapid, intensive and creative work session in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face the planning challenges confronting American communities.

CHARRETTE PREPARATION

Prior to the charrette, the Dover-Kohl team focused their efforts on gathering base information and studying the existing physical conditions of Fairfax Boulevard. This analysis included learning about local history, researching precedent corridor planning efforts, reviewing previous plans and studies, studying traffic data and reports, and analyzing the physical and economic characteristics of Fairfax Boulevard. A more detailed overview of the team's background analysis can be found in Chapter 1.

Members of the team visited Fairfax in February 2007 and met with the Mayor and City Council, representatives from the Fairfax Boulevard Partnership, Planning Commissioners, Economic Development Authority members, and City staff in preparation for the charrette. The meetings and interviews helped the team to better understand the dynamics of Fairfax Boulevard and the leadership's vision and ideas for the future of this important corridor.

In addition to the meetings with local leaders and City staff, a Kick-off Presentation was held on Tuesday, February 13. Interested citizens, City leaders, and local and regional stakeholders gathered at City Hall for the evening presentation. Mayor Lederer welcomed the crowd and stressed the importance of community participation throughout the planning effort. Victor Dover, principal of Dover, Kohl & Partners and charrette leader, reinforced the need for citizen involvement throughout the charrette process to ensure the creation of a plan truly representative of community ideals. Victor provided background information on traditional town building, infill development, redevelopment, and great streets in the region and around the world. At the close of the presentation Council members and others asked questions and offered initial input to the team. An exit survey was distributed to further gain input and the entire event was broadcast live on Cable TV Cityscreen-12.

A key element in preparing for the charrette was generating public awareness. The City and Fairfax Boulevard Partnership spread the word about the planning process by advertising in local and regional newspapers, posting public notices, direct mailings to all residents and business owners, flyers in local businesses, media events, and an interactive website. Information was included in the City's monthly newsletter, *Cityscene*, and updates on the process were distributed using the City's electronic Message Alert System (eMAS). In addition, banners announcing the planning process were placed in two visible locations along the corridor before and during the charrette. One was located at Chain Bridge Road near the intersection of Fairfax Boulevard and the other was placed at 10960 Fairfax Boulevard to mark the location of the design studio.



The City and Fairfax Boulevard Partnership mailed postcards to property owners and residents to announce the events.



Market Commons – Clarendon (Arlington County)



Connecticut Avenue NW



Old Town Alexandria



Georgetown



Capitol Hill



Fairfax Corner

Study Tours

In order to place Fairfax Boulevard in the planning context of the greater Washington, D.C. metro region, the team arrived a few days prior to the start of the charrette to allow time to study and tour the corridor and its surroundings, including Georgetown, Capitol Hill, and Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C., Arlington's Rosslyn-Ballston Metro Corridor (including the Market Commons development in Clarendon), and Old Town Alexandria. The team examined recent developments in Fairfax County, including nearby Fairfax Corner and the Merrifield Town Center. The team also visited Old Town Fairfax to document the historic pattern of town-building and to better understand the recent planning and development efforts within the heart of the City. During the study tours the team documented the built environment through photographs, sketches, and measurements of streets and public spaces. Visiting these areas helped the team to understand the Boulevard's importance within a larger regional context and offered the team insight with regards to the character of historic settlements and recent developments in the region.



Old Town Fairfax



Site Analysis

Team members walked and photographed the Boulevard, noting street design, building form, building placement, architectural character, and natural features. With base maps in hand, the planners and designers documented the existing land use patterns, analyzing street connections, block sizes, building types, and building heights found along the Boulevard. Team members noted potential areas for infill development, redevelopment, land conservation, preservation, and the unique conditions and characteristics of Fairfax Boulevard.



THE CHARRETTE

On Saturday, March 24, approximately 200 community members and business owners turned out to Fairfax High School for the Hands-on Design Session. Mayor Lederer welcomed the crowd and thanked everyone for their participation and dedication to the planning process. Victor Dover led a brief “food for thought” presentation on traditional town design, multi-modal transportation planning, and what peer communities are doing to transform their strip-commercial corridors. Victor then explained the day’s design exercise to participants, oriented participants to base maps, and set ground rules and goals for the session.

Working in small groups of approximately ten people per table, participants gathered around tables in the high school cafeteria to share their varied ideas for the future of Fairfax Boulevard. Each table was equipped with base maps, markers, scale bars, and aerial photographs of the Boulevard. Analysis diagrams and large maps of the area were placed around the room on boards to help familiarize participants with the unique conditions of the Boulevard. A facilitator from the Dover-Kohl team was assigned to each table to assist participants in a series planning exercises.

During the first part of the table sessions, community members identified the important issues associated with the overall future of the corridor. Participants actively drew on base maps to illustrate how they might like to see the area evolve in the future by describing the uses, open spaces, building design, street design, transportation, parking, and services for the Boulevard. For the second part of the workshop, participants focused on specific redevelopment areas along the boulevard. Each table worked on one of the “close-up” areas – Kamp Washington, Northfax, or Fairfax



Mayor Lederer welcomed the community at the Hands-on Design Session.



Victor Dover explained the rules and goals of the session.



Over 200 people participated in the Hands-on Design Session, eager to work together to create a plan for the Boulevard.



Residents shared ideas for the future of Fairfax Boulevard.



Circle. Box lunches were provided and participants worked into the early afternoon refining their ideas and illustrating possibilities for the areas.

At the end of the workshop, a spokesperson from each table reported their table's ideas for the future of the Boulevard to the entire assembly. Common themes began to emerge quickly, as the important goals for the improvement and redevelopment of the Boulevard were identified. Of the many ideas heard, some of the most widely shared ideas included:

- make the Boulevard more friendly for pedestrians and cyclists
- add more places for people to visit, shop, live, work and be entertained along the Boulevard
- relieve traffic congestion at the intersections by adding new streets
- make the intersections proud features of the community
- create a true boulevard with a median, trees, wider sidewalks, and frontage roads
- preserve open spaces and add more "green" to the corridor
- plan for future transit possibilities
- promote local businesses and create a plan that is market supported

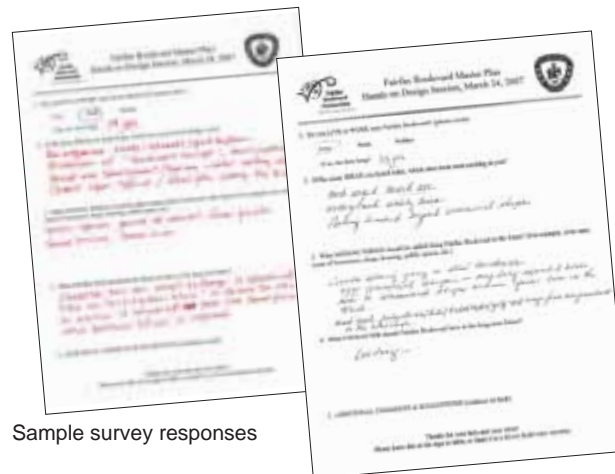
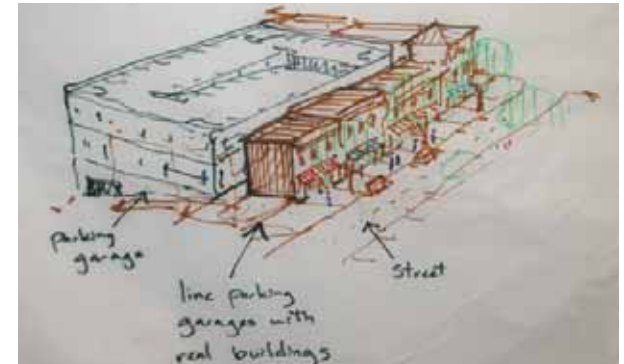
In addition to the group presentations, each participant filled out a survey at the end of the session; the survey responses revealed additional ideas and common goals. The intent of the Hands-on Design Session was to forge an initial consensus and develop an overall vision.



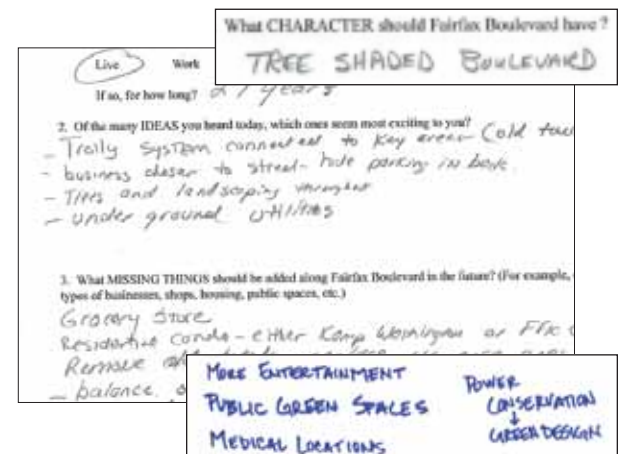
A representative from each table presented their work to the group.



Sample table drawings



Sample survey responses



From Sunday, March 25 through Thursday, March 29, the design team continued to work in an open design studio at the site of the former La Mina furniture store (10960 Fairfax Boulevard) near Kamp Washington. The team worked to integrate the many ideas heard from the community throughout the week into a plan to guide the continued development of the Boulevard. Citizens and local leaders were encouraged to stop by the studio to check the status of the plan, provide further input, and to make sure the design team was on the right track. The convenient location of the studio, as well as the immense community interest, led over 100 people to participate throughout the week. The table drawings and plans from the Saturday design session were placed around the room for easy review as new participants became involved.

While community members, property owners, and City officials visited the studio, the design team continued to analyze the information gathered at the hands-on session and site analysis in order to formulate the initial concepts for the plan. The team was tasked with synthesizing the many ideas heard from the community throughout the week into one final plan. The planners and designers created diagrams, illustrations, computer visualizations, sketches, and plans, working to combine and refine the ideas. Working along Fairfax Boulevard allowed the design team ready access to the study area during all hours and on different days of the week. The planners observed day-to-day traffic patterns, visited local business, and experienced other details of everyday life in Fairfax.

In addition to the open design studio, members of the design team met with property owners, developers, and technical experts in scheduled meetings. The meetings were used to answer design questions, discuss the draft plans, and gain further

input with regards to details associated with the redevelopment of the Boulevard. Technical meetings included sessions with City Councilors, Planning Commissioners, members of the Fairfax Boulevard Partnership, Economic Development Authority leaders, Parks and Recreation staff, Public Works staff, Commission on the Fine Arts representatives, George Mason University representatives, and property and business owners. The technical meetings helped to further shape the detailed elements of the plan and to ensure that the ideas being processed were consistent amongst many viewpoints.



The designers started by compiling all of the ideas heard at the Hands-on Design Session onto one big map.



The multi-disciplinary team worked together on the technical components of the plan.

If it were up to you alone, which of the following would be MOST important and which would be LESS important? Number these items in order of importance to you, with #1 being the most important and #7 being the least important.							
Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Walking	15	5	7	10	7	0	0
No Change	3	1	0	0	2	10	26
Outside Traffic	7	4	1	9	9	9	1
Business	9	7	11	4	7	3	0
Beautification	9	10	12	7	3	1	0
Commercial Strip	0	1	1	2	7	18	10
Character	11	14	7	5	2	4	0

Results of the surveys distributed in the design studio to visitors.



The design team held daily pin-ups in the studio.



The team worked on-site, creating the plan for the Boulevard.

The charrette week ended with an evening “Work-in-Progress” Presentation on Thursday, March 29 at City Hall. Over 75 citizens attended the presentation to see and hear how the planners and designers synthesized the community’s ideas into a vision for the future of Fairfax Boulevard. Mayor Lederer welcomed the crowd and thanked community members for their participation in the important planning effort. Victor Dover then began the presentation with a summary of the week’s events, then presented sketches and visualizations illustrating the hypothetical build-out of the Boulevard over the course of the next 50 years. Focusing on the three gateways into town, Victor walked the audience through a “future tour” showing potential scenarios for redevelopment. Renderings showed “before” and “after” illustrations of possible redevelopment opportunities. A 3-dimensional model of the Boulevard offered viewers the feeling of driving or walking down the redeveloped corridor.

Edward Starkie of Urban Advisors, then spoke about the market and implementation strategies. Rick Hall of Hall Planning and Engineering then discussed the transportation components of the plan, and reported on how improvements would enhance traffic flow and increase pedestrian mobility. Geoffrey Ferrell and Mary Madden of Ferrell Madden Associates concluded the presentation with an overview of necessary revisions to the City’s land development regulations. At the end of the presentation, an exit survey was distributed to gauge the community’s opinion on the ideas presented that evening.



Over 75 citizens attended the Work-in-Progress Presentation.



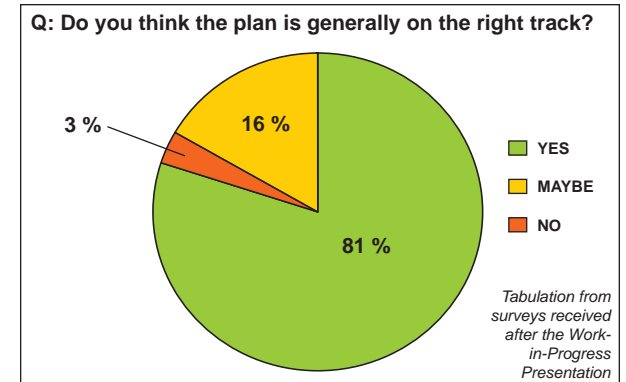
Team members provided a summary of initial coding ideas.



Sample Work-in-Progress exit surveys.



Rick Hall discussed the transportation components of the plan.



AFTER THE CHARRETTE

After the week-long charrette, the illustrative plan scenarios produced during the charrette were refined and this report was created. Charrette participants were asked to continue to give their input on the draft plans; the plan and corresponding images were available for review at City Hall as well as on the City of Fairfax web site. The following report represents a synthesis of the community’s desires and goals for the future of Fairfax Boulevard.



first principles 3

Through the charrette process, the community and design team arrived at a series of basic urban design, transportation, and policy principles to guide the redevelopment of Fairfax Boulevard. Shaped by input from participants during the charrette, the “First Principles” embody a shared vision for the future of the corridor. The First Principles summarize the results of the open planning process and promote responsible growth and development. The principles apply to Fairfax Boulevard, but are also essential planning principles that should apply to the redevelopment of corridors throughout the region. Fairfax Boulevard has the opportunity to become a national model for corridor redevelopment.

This chapter presents the broad scope of the community’s vision for the future of Fairfax Boulevard; specific design components of each principle are further described and illustrated in Chapter 4. General guidance on implementing each principle is included; detailed implementation strategies can be found in Chapter 7.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

- Make the Boulevard a walkable ‘great street’
- Change on the community’s terms, controlling size & scale
- Grow a mix of uses & destinations
- Balance traffic capacity, safety & character
- Plan for feasible, phase-able pieces
- Enable the market

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN



The Illustrative Master Plan was created during the charrette. The plan synthesizes community ideas and identifies key opportunity sites for potential development, redevelopment, and conservation. This map is for illustrative purposes and is not a regulating document. A larger version of the plan is on display at City Hall.

MAKE THE BOULEVARD A WALKABLE 'GREAT STREET'

In its present condition, Fairfax Boulevard is a regional thoroughfare whose primary purpose is to move automobiles east and west throughout the region. What started as a "bypass" road, allowing motorists to reach Kamp Washington, the former location of an auto camp in the 1930s, has grown into a heavily traveled six-lane highway and a road that caters to pass-through traffic rather than the needs of the local community. Instead of functioning as an utilitarian roadway that divides the community, the Boulevard should be transformed into a community asset and point of pride for residents and community leaders.

Through the duration of the charrette, Fairfax residents were charged to dream big, to imagine how they would like Fairfax Boulevard to look and function in the near and long term future. By thinking big and working together, Fairfax residents expressed their hope for Fairfax Boulevard to become a "great street" enhanced by street trees and reconfigured as a safe and attractive place for pedestrians.

Through proper planning and urban design, Fairfax Boulevard can emerge as one of the best streets in the Washington, D.C. metro region and become a postcard picture of the region. In order to accomplish this goal, the local community must change the way they deal with the Boulevard. Rather than allowing it to do just one job, moving the maximum number of cars at peak hour, Fairfax residents and business owners can demand more from this important roadway – that it not only provide an excellent auto experience, but also an excellent walking, cycling, shopping, working, and living experience. This change in mindset from viewing the corridor as simply an automobile oriented thoroughfare, to a cherished component of the City, can ultimately result in greater walkability and the transformation of Fairfax Boulevard from a conventional suburban strip-commercial corridor to a great street.



Fairfax Boulevard, existing conditions, 2007

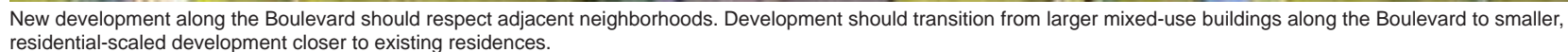


Fairfax Boulevard, *in the future*: a new street design (including street trees to separate pedestrians from moving vehicles and the introduction of a slow lane) creates a comfortable pedestrian environment.

It is not surprising that, given their multiple roles in urban life, streets require and use vast amounts of land. In the United States, from 25 to 35 percent of a city's developed land is likely to be in public right-of-way, mostly streets. If we can develop and design streets so that they are wonderful, fulfilling places to be, community building places, attractive public places for all people of cities and neighborhoods, then we will have successfully designed about 1/3 of the city directly and will have an immense impact on the rest.

– Allan Jacobs, *Great Streets*

Property owners and developers are eager to move forward with the redevelopment of sites along the Boulevard. The market is ripe for reinvestment and the growing demand for land within the City has made people realize that many properties along the Boulevard are under-utilized and have significant redevelopment potential. The Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan illustrates the hypothetical build-out of the corridor. The plan was created with community input and captures the vision of Fairfax residents with regards to the size and scale of development appropriate for Fairfax. Future development and redevelopment needs to respect the community's overall vision for the Boulevard. In order to realize the vision, the City and community must diligently control the size and scale of buildings and character of development. The best way to do this is through revised land development regulations that are form-based and focus on the built result rather than solely land use.



GROW A MIX OF USES & DESTINATIONS

To provide a center for the community and to better address transportation problems, Fairfax Boulevard should support a vibrant mix of uses, including housing, offices, green spaces, and civic uses. Currently, the majority of parcels along the corridor contain single uses. This pattern fails to create places where people can walk, congregate, and spend time. This separation of land uses requires multiple long car trips to get the errands of daily life accomplished and since the highly traveled streets are poorly interconnected and rarely unburdened by parallel routes, everyone seems to need the same road at the same

time. If 1) land uses are mixed and 2) streets are interconnected in parallel routes north and south of Fairfax Boulevard, Fairfax would be doing the two things that matter the absolute most to managing traffic congestion. Instead of continuing to require the separation of uses, which requires people to make multiple car trips to meet their daily needs, Fairfax Boulevard should provide “park once” destinations. By allowing and encouraging the integration of land uses, Fairfax Boulevard can create destinations and gathering places for the local community and visitors alike.



The special centers along the Boulevard should have a mix of uses and building types, creating an interesting place and destination for Fairfax residents and visitors.

BALANCE TRAFFIC CAPACITY, SAFETY & CHARACTER

The Fairfax region and Fairfax Boulevard in particular, is legendary for its traffic congestion. As population increases, traffic will continue to grow. The pattern of segregated land uses typical along the corridor exacerbates traffic by requiring people to make multiple car trips to meet the needs of daily life. Because Fairfax Boulevard is one of the few continuous east-west connections in the area, regional traffic is funneled onto the corridor. A more integrated street network would help dissipate traffic and provide multiple routes for vehicles and pedestrians.

As Fairfax plans for its future, it is important to maintain traffic capacity but also ensure the safety of both vehicles and pedestrians. Fairfax Boulevard should remain a central organizing element of the region's transportation network, and also a beautiful place that is safe and pleasant for walking and biking. In its current configuration, Fairfax Boulevard is primarily an instrument for moving cars, with minimal infrastructure in place for safe pedestrian movement. In addition, the overall physical design and layout of buildings along the corridor are organized in a manner that caters to the automobile, and negatively impacts the safety, walkability, and the general appearance of the corridor.

Fairfax Boulevard has the potential to be transformed into an urban street with expanded economic activity and improved physical design that promotes walking and biking. By emphasizing the safety and character of the Boulevard, it can become a unifying feature that serves the entire community, while still maintaining efficient traffic flow.



New streets (highlighted in red) complete the network of streets, adding multiple options for travel.



With minor adjustments to the current roadway, the street could be shared with cyclists and transit vehicles.

PLAN FOR FEASIBLE, PHASE-ABLE PIECES

The plan for Fairfax Boulevard illustrates the hypothetical build-out of the corridor and the properties along this important roadway. Understanding that the complete transformation of the corridor will not happen overnight, the plan for Fairfax Boulevard is designed to be implemented in both the near term and over a longer period of time. This “100 year” plan encompasses the ideals and desires of the community for how the corridor should evolve over time. During the charrette, the design team worked with the City and property owners to discuss and strategize on how properties along the corridor can be redeveloped. Pulling from various discussions, the design team worked to create a plan that can be implemented one piece at a time, as opportunities arise. This phased, incremental approach to growth allows for infill development and redevelopment to occur incrementally over time. By having a plan in place for Fairfax Boulevard, the corridor can evolve in a way that respects and contributes to the community’s overall vision for a livable and economically vital corridor.



Existing conditions: Northfax, 2007



Initial phases of redevelopment: The slow lane improves circulation in the area; infill development begins on a few parcels.



Future build-out: A complete network of blocks and streets are formed and new buildings address the street space. The area is transformed into the heart of the Boulevard and center of town.

ENABLE THE MARKET

Fairfax Boulevard presents an opportunity to promote a variety of new businesses, with the benefits of job creation, increased tax base, and new social centers for the community. Treating Fairfax Boulevard like a Main Street will stimulate economic development and generate higher and better uses for most properties along the corridor. Numerous opportunity sites exist along the corridor, including several large parcels ready for redevelopment. These sites are already served by public utilities and are proximate to existing community investment. Supporting a mixed-use and immersive pattern of redevelopment will generate significant economic returns and a quality environment that can be enjoyed by the residents of Fairfax. The combination of a main street condition with integrated residences, offices, and recreational amenities will create a natural draw for many consumers and present a significant economic opportunity for the City.



FIRST PRINCIPLES — GETTING THERE

The following steps are necessary to achieve the First Principles:

- a. Adopt the Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan.
- b. Amend the City's Zoning Code to include the Fairfax Boulevard District Code.
- c. Promote the Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan and continue to build public support for the redevelopment of the Boulevard.
- d. Continue to coordinate the multiple City commissions, agencies, and organizations that will impact implementation.

Additional Implementation Strategies are included in Chapter 7.